COMPULSORY WORK EXPERIENCE FOR CHEMISTRY MAJORS – STRUCTURE AND SUCCESSES

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History

Workplace Learning has been a compulsory component in the Analytical Chemistry major of the Bachelor of Science degree at Charles Sturt University (CSU) for over 20 years. Five years ago, this WIL experience was formalised into CHM335 Analytical Chemistry Industry Experience, a one semester subject with defined standards and assessments for the work being completed. The workplace learning component of the Analytical Chemistry major was formalised to meet the RACI requirements for accreditation and CSU requirements for WPL. In conversations among the Heads of Chemistry, it seems that while there are Chemistry some courses in Australia with optional work placement, this subject may be the first and only compulsory work placement subject for Chemistry majors.

Structure

CHM335 is a single semester subject that requires 5 weeks – a minimum of 180 hours - of chemical work in a commercial/industry/academic laboratory; these hours include 20 hours of laboratory induction and progress meetings with the employer/workplace supervisor; and the work conducted must be equivalent to 2nd/3rd year laboratory work. CHM335 is highly structured, with students required to identify and contact a workplace, prepare and submit a proposal requiring approval before starting the work placement, prepare 2 interim progress reports, a final assessment from the employer, and a final report from the student about the work completed, activities pursued, and skills developed.

Successes

Feedback from employers and students is overwhelmingly positive, with employers particularly impressed and satisfied with the formal structure and reporting required of the students. Employers report the CSU students have been inquisitive and committed. Perhaps the best success of the subject is students being offered a job at their CHM335 workplace upon completion of the subject.

This talk will briefly discuss the Structure and Successes mentioned above, as well as address important questions associated with WPL subjects such as:
How do we make sure students are ready to be sent to the workplace?
How do you manage a number of students in various labs?
How do we ensure the work completed by the students will be adequate?
How do we assess the work completed by the students?

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